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Several short plays by Erin Jane Nelson



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Three short plays performed live at Important Projects (Oakland, CA)
December 14th, 2012 at 8pm:

A play about a bowl of fruit told from the point of view of a really unripe pear.

A play about a guy who is just soooooo tired.

A play about Janey, who is a man and a figure model.

Three additional plays for reading privately:

A play where nothing is funny but all the dialog is spoken while laughing.

A play about a dancer being interviewed.

A play about someone who is saving up money to buy a diamond for themselves.

A play about a bowl of fruit told from the point of view of a really unripe pear.

Scene opens on a kitchen. In the center, on an island, there is a bowl of fruit. Pear is a very unripe Bosc, lying sideways. Apple is a Red Delicious that is probably mealy and covered in wax, lying several feet away from Pear. It's a calm afternoon. The residents of the home are at work and school.

Pear: *[looks around]* God, this kitchen is so pathetic; these people are the biggest fucking slob. It's going to be days before I leave this hell. I can't believe they just couldn't leave me at the store for another week or so. There was another pear near me in the display. Mama Mia, was she a fox. I haven't seen an ass like that before. *[lifts a thumb]* I'd like to give that ass a proper bruise. If I could have just talked to her before I left, at least I'd have something to get off to while sitting here in between these total philistines of apples and bananas. Red delicious? You've got to be fucking kidding me. It's embarrassing to be in the same bowl as these complete neanderthals. Also what the fuck is that vidalia onion doing in here? You might have well just put me in the fridge.

[Sighs and re-adjusts]

Look, I don't mean to sound so negative. It's just hard, when you can recognize all the limitations of your condition and yet have no agency to make appropriate changes. I'm not ripe! I'm not going to be ripe until next Thursday. That's a long time to just sit here and stare at my own ugly body and wait to be chosen. It's like, I know I won't be chosen first and it's not because of taste or preference or anything, it's just that I'm rock hard. And this company is really difficult. I would feel way more hopeful if I were surrounded by some pomegranates, persimmons, radishes, grapes, anything with a little more character. It just makes me feel like I belong to this class, this totally pedestrian class of fruit and I just know that I've worked so hard for the last few months and I don't deserve to end up here.

[Pauses, breathes, rolls over]

It could be worse, I guess. So many of my peers end up getting processed. I could be in a goddamn fruit cup right now, for all I know—although at least then I wouldn't have to have this anxiety. My life would already be over.

Really, it's just that I'm scared. I'm scared to be a fucking let down. I know I'm going to be way better than the apples and bananas—no concern there. But I feel like I might be a little set up to fail. There are a couple kids who live here and I just know that I'm going to be the fucking asshole that gets eaten wayyyyy too early. The kid's gonna just go for it and bite in and be totally disappointed. Then straight to the trash. I want to be absorbed. I want to be good,

enjoyed. Even roasted or poached. Just something other than a single-biter. Can you imagine what it's like to die as a single-biter?

Apple: *[Coughs]* I don't know why you feel so victimized. It's not like you're going to be one of the fruits that transcends its life of fruit-hood.

Pear: *[Snottily]* Sorry, did you say something?

Apple: Yeah, believe it or fucking not, this "philistine" of a fruit dared to open her mouth. Ever since you ended up here last night you've been doing nothing but ruminating in disappointment. Why is it so hard to just realize that you're a piece of fruit and that's all you'll ever be? Maybe you'll be a one-biter, maybe you'll be a little slice on a salad, maybe you'll end up the subject of a painting, but you can't stress out so much about those things you have no control over. You know, I get the whole "master of your own fate" thing but to a certain extent, you can't expect that the world is going to indefinitely cooperate. Especially when we are all just part of a very complicated global economy. Didn't you notice all the blueberries from Peru at the grocery store? Imagine how out of place THEY felt?

I can tell that you really care about your performance and I truly admire that, but there's nothing that you can do to change your fate at this point—you're way too deep into this narrative of your life. I hate all these entitled organic sons of bitches who think that just because they're precious little asses have been hand-wiped from day one that they are destined to be famous or important... everyone's out to be the next Warhol Banana, Caravaggio Grapes, or Oldenburg Cherry. It's just not going to happen for most of us. Personally, I feel like I was born with the odds stacked against me. I'm such a disgusting variety of apple and yet, you don't hear me constantly bitching about being mealy or waxy or "pedestrian." It's just the way things are. I would be thrilled to be eaten, even if only one bite and even if by one of the toddlers before I start to shrivel up. I respect that you have all this energy to give, but—and take this from someone with very little chance of surpassing their cultural limitations—but that doesn't count as much as it used to. I mean a hundred years ago we would have been in a christmas stocking or a birthday package. Fresh fruit was an expression of luxury, special occasions. There's just too much of us now—people have figured out how to fucking grow and ship us from Peru to New Mexico. We just aren't the kind of respectable cultural symbols we used to be. I mean I know a lot of you local organic assholes get photographed for Simple Magazine, or put in Williams Sonoma ceramic bowls, or cooked into dishes with truffle oil and ramps or whatever, but you can't expect to be put on a pedestal just because of what you are and what your family said you always could be. At a certain point, you just have to let go and accept that yes, perhaps you will be a one-biter.

A play about a guy who is just soooooooo tired.

Man paces around a darkened room. There are friends visiting, laughing, enjoying wine as the night progresses. It's not even 9:30pm, and yet the Man is wobbling from exhaustion, fighting to stay interested in what is happening in the room. He walks over to the wall, reaches out an arm to support himself and lets his body hunch over. He is holding a cup of coffee in his other hand.

Man: It's happening again. This always seems to happen to me. *[Starts to nod off and catches himself. He slaps his face, shakes his shoulders, and starts to somberly pace around]* I get so much sleep, I eat well, I exercise regularly, but I'm just always tired. I don't think it's depression, because my friends have told me that it could be depression, so I talked to a talk-doc and he said I seemed well adjusted and ya know--my psycho vitals are all there and in check.

[pauses, walks in a little circle]

It was nice though, talking to someone. I noticed when I was telling this talk-doc about all my problems, I felt awake-- like beyond lucid. Every time I was given the chance to just emphatically complain, all of a sudden my body would cooperate and I would feel alive. But I had to stop going. Because that's all negative energy and that's just not the person I want to be.

[walks over to the other wall and resumes his pathetic pose]

It's true, the only time I feel awake--I mean truly honestly awake--is when I'm so absolutely pissed. It's a shame I have such a happy, easy life because I feel like if I weren't so comfortable all the time, I might have a little more energy. But then what if that wasn't the case... What if I sell off my beautiful life for a taste of unrest and I get angry for a bit but then it's just exhaustion again. Except if my life was in shambles, I wouldn't ever be able to get it out of shambles because I'd always be too tired to try to make a better situation for myself. So, it's better here, in my normal routine, where I'm comfortable--albeit completely tired. I guess I could try going to some protests or volunteering in a soup kitchen. Would that make me angry though? It's hard to know what you're going to care about before you care about it. Sometimes when I'm reading the paper, I feel like I should have more of a reaction to all the awful stuff going on in the world but it's like "oh yeah another air strike, oh yeah that guy cut up his little daughter, oh yeah Tunisia...great" more things I have to be insecure about not feeling this shared cultural anger about. *[Looks up, around, a little crazed]*. See, I'm getting a little pissy and now I'm starting to feel a little more awake, but I also recognize that I'm whining and pitying my totally privileged position in the world, so fuck it, I'm back at square one because I don't want to be a complainer, especially not an entitled one.

All I can do after eight p.m. is lie down and watch crime shows. There's nothing wrong with this because I work hard five or six days a week and the crime shows merely replace other stupid hobbies and time-passes that other people do when they're not working, but it's still something I feel programmed to have some guilt about, especially since I spend about three hours a night watching them. *[muttering to self]* Thank God there are so many crime shows. What if I run out? Am I going to run out?

[takes a sip of coffee]

It would be one thing if I was just sleeping immediately after I lay down in bed, as though my body just wanted more sleep than average other bodies, but that's just not the case. I get into bed and turn on some crime show--which I love, but I don't doze off for hours. Maybe it's that the crime is so riveting and keeps my adrenaline just high enough to fight off sleep, but I watch hours of this stuff. It doesn't get boring. And in the morning, it's not like I can sleep beyond a socially acceptable time--it's always eight or nine hours. I just love how my body feels there, under the sheets, on the couch, watching the TV figure out crimes. It's heaven. My friends know that I do this. They come over to hang out sometimes, like right now, and they want to eat dinner and laugh and drink and possibly go out to a bar, but I can't get it together and even pretend that I don't want to be watching crime shows, inches from sleep. Eventually, I ask if they want to watch some shows, sometimes they want to, I think maybe they're just being nice though, because usually they are horrified when I queue up the third or fourth episode in a night. Is that pathetic?

Don't get me wrong, I love my friends, but at a certain point, I feel like maybe I don't need to see them as much as I tell myself I do, especially since I just can't stay awake. I named my bed Valentine, because that's how I feel about it. She's my valentine. Please don't think I'm perverted or anything, I just love my bed, the embrace, the smells, the textures. It's all I think about.

[Sits down in a chair and finishes coffee, gulping]

To get through a night like this, I have to drink so much coffee, not that it makes much of a difference. For a while, I thought maybe my body was reverse and that coffee only made me tireder, but I've accepted that that's impossible and the coffee minutely helps, or at least it's all I can think of to make me feel like I'm taking some initiative to prevent my exhaustion. Anyway, I know that it's a pretty disgusting lifestyle, being this tired. I just can't help it and feeling ashamed and the shame just makes me want to retreat deeper into my anonymous world of empathy for characters that I know aren't real--they just feel so real. The events of their life happen in such quick succession--how do they just eliminate all idle time on television? There is no boredom, no waiting. It's just triumph and struggle and triumph and struggle and always having something to

work on, to figure out. Time is full of projects and death is constantly a real possibility. There's no time for second guessing or even having an identity, it's all action and all despair. But it moves me, it moves me in ways that aren't evident, but I know one day all that potential energy will turn into something great. One day I will have maxed out on being tired and then there will be nothing but energy, nothing but action and despair.

A play about Janey, who is a man and a figure model.

Janey is lounging in front of a space heater on a carpeted plinth. Students surround him but he wouldn't know that because all he can see are legs and the backs of easels. In some cases, he can see the top of curly hair, or the arc of a cap. Janey is relaxed, vaguely turned on, and lost in mundane thought.

Janey: They have to know that I know that they're thinking about what I'm thinking about. Who knows--maybe not. In reality, they're probably thinking about how to make my narrow shoulders look more masculine or how to make my nose more proportional with my pouty lips. How to make my hands look less awkward, and my stomach less pathetic. Or they're thinking about how they need to call their worried mothers who are busy worrying back in nameless small towns that are not here, in New York City. The ones whose mothers are in New York City are busy feeling annoyed by the narrow scope of reference of their peers and thinking about how much St. Marks has changed since they were little.

I wonder if they have an opinion about my body. Do they consider me handsome? Do I look like a queer? Do they know that I went to this school? Are they thinking I'm a failure for having obviously gone to this school and now returning to be a mere figure model for this foundation drawing course? Do they realize how hard it is to get your life going after undergrad? Are they impressed by my lack of self-consciousness about my sub-par body? Do they want to ask me for a cigarette as a lead in to more flirtatious conversations? Do they think that I'm cold--I'm kind of cold?

[changes position]

How bizarre to be on the other end of this. I remember, freshman year of school, listening to the new Kanye West album in my headphones as I drew the figure models. Drawing naked people was such a relief after the months of drawing cubes--using rulers, sticking my stupid thumb and pencil out in front of my face and pretending to judge the scale of sphere one to cone two. I remember being all like "when the fuck are they going to let us start making installations and shit." Man, I was so cherry-assed back in those days. This was before fucking that French couple, or trying Molly on accident, or going to my first Bikram Yoga class--before I knew to roll my eyes when someone started talking about Foucault. I didn't even really get what "Foucault" was--I probably thought it was a school in Europe. So much has changed.

I wonder if Loretta has texted me back by now. That's one good thing about modeling--I mean besides being back in the halls of my alma mater and secretly printing all my photos in the computer lab. When I'm up here, I can

stop anxiously checking my phone over and over for text messages from women I may not even be that interested in getting involved with. I just need to stop thinking about people in terms of their romantic potential. It's not me. I'm not good at this stuff. I should be focusing on the books I need to read before the new year, or getting that video documentation to Charlie...Loretta's kind of perfect though. I didn't think I'd be this excited about someone for a long time after Gina and I split. Loretta is so not Gina... God, it makes me feel so unintelligent to think about this stuff.

Okay, Janey, here are your structured two hours of doing nothing but holding still and thinking about all the things you always wish you had time to think about--like your projects and recent lectures you've been to.

[changes pose]

Damn, I can't believe how much has changed since I was a freshman in college. The iPhone hadn't been released yet, the new New Museum was just a glimmer in some architect's eye, the stock market was still in four digits, no occupy, no Egypt, no nothing. It was so easy to think, back then, that graduating into an MFA and then into a cushy teaching gig was actually a possibility, or that working in the abyss of some museum administration position was an exciting prospect with a lot of creative agency. Whatever, this is the life I chose and I'm happy. I'm happy that I have nothing to contribute to the live ticker of global struggle--whatever. I refuse to feel backed into a corner on this one. I'm always doing this to myself. New Goal: no more self-defeating thoughts. The only people who do well nowadays are the morons who unequivocally believe they're "doing something important."

I love seeing what these undergraduates draw. The first hour and a half is dedicated to really traditional interpretations, you know, all about form. But then for the last half an hour, the teacher is supposed to let them interpret my body however they please. Oh my god that's filthy. Why didn't I ever realize how filthy that is? Yes. Interpret my body, undergraduates. Arrest me! Spray me with your orange spray straight in the eyes.

[laughs, changes positions]

Yes, that's a hard-on forming and no, I'm not ashamed. That's what I used to wonder about these guys...like what are you supposed to do if you get a big throbbing hard-on. Well, my feeling is just like--whatever, embrace it. It's probably easier to draw a hard dick than my soft little cold shriveled up dick. But now I can't lose it, I gotta keep it going for this whole twenty minutes. Sex and violence sex and violence. Like that Anaïs Nin story where the girl gets fucked in the ass during the public execution. She loved it. Or at least that was the impression I got from the story. Was that story told by the penetrator or the

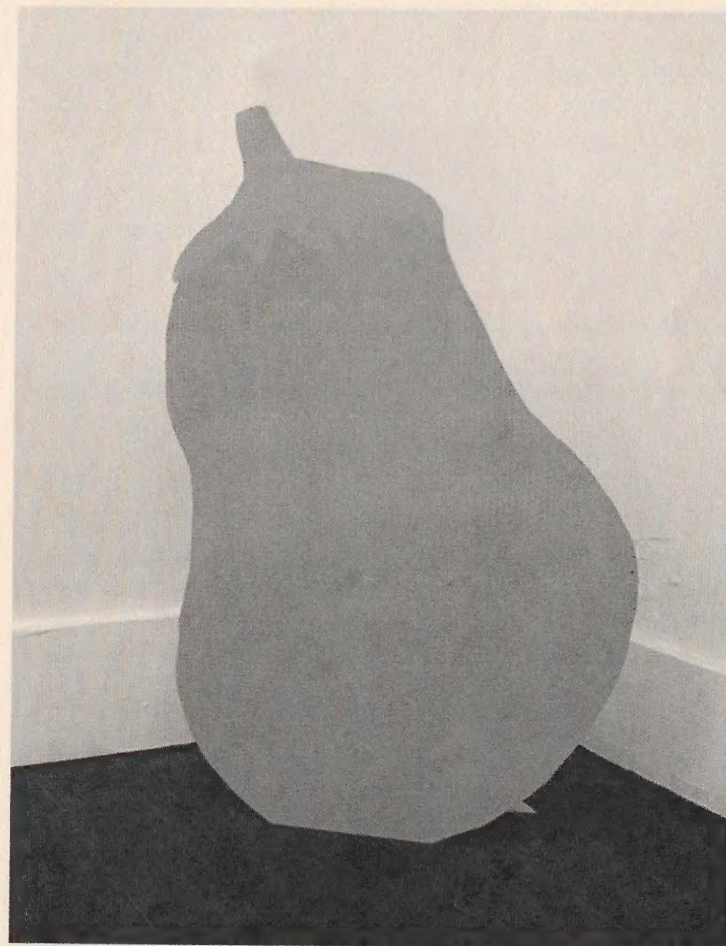
penetrated? God, I'm so into being a bottom right now. I think that's why I like Loretta so much. She's such a top and Gina was such a bottom. It never worked. I wonder if she texted me yet...This is good this is keeping it up. Oh my god look at that leg, such a supple awkward leg of a probably-nineteen-year-old. Not that I would be interested in sleeping with a nineteen-year-old, but in this realm of drawing-classroom-fantasy-boner-maintenance, it's the best damn leg I've ever seen. I wonder what all the freshman girls are thinking--are they grossed out in all their still-vanilla glory of recent suburban graduation? If so, great, I'll teach them gently what it's like to be a total degenerate weirdo of an artist. Even the sensitive, future-Abromovic's need a little filthiness, and I'm just the live model to give it to them.

Notes

The set for Love's Labor's 1 is built out of new works by Erin Jane Nelson as well as works and objects borrowed from the studios of Emma Spertus, Carrie Hott, Dan Swindel, Jason Benson, Suzanna Żak, and Scotty Slade

The actors performing at Important Projects are Scotty Slade as Pear, Emily Tarella as Apple, Nick Medina as Man, and Ian Dolton-Thornton as Janey.

Audio recordings were made possible by the help of Aaron Harbor.



A play where nothing is funny but all the dialog is spoken while laughing.

Persons 1 + 2 are in a museum on a date. This is their forty-third date, so they've already had sex and even talked about taking things to "the next level." They are discussing boring, daily things in the museum. None of what they're talking about is funny, but the entire conversation is told while laughing.

Person 1: Did you call your Mom about Thanksgiving?

Person 2: Yeah.

Person 1: Was she upset?

Person 2: I mean, yes, obviously she was upset but she obviously understands why I would come over to your family's house this year.

Person 1: Well, I'm glad that you'll be there and I know that my Mom will be super excited to see you.

Person 2: Did you buy the tickets yet?

Person 1: No, I wanted to make sure that you'd be able to miss work on Tuesday first

Person 2: Well I already told you it'd fine.

Person 1: I know I know I just haven't gotten around to it yet.

A play about a dancer being interviewed.

Dancer is being interviewed by a talk show host. Dancer has an upcoming role in a major motion picture. Dancer is bubbly, self-aware, and very gracious to the TV talk-show host. Dancer is sitting in a chair, she is well-dressed but wearing clothes comfortable enough to dance in, should the need arise.

Dancer: No, it wasn't intimidating working with Alicia. She is such a talented musician and a total sweetheart, so I was just really lucky to be able to connect with her in that way. I'd been a fan of her music since I was little.

[pauses, waiting for next question, nods occasionally]

Yeah yeah.... definitely!! I mean when I was a kid, I guess I always knew that I wanted to be a dancer, but I never thought I'd go **this** far. I'm just enjoying every minute of it. And Marty, the director was just such a big help for someone like me who had never worked on a major film set. I was just so used to doing everything in one take--you know like in a theatrical dance performance, you don't get to say "cut" or start over and string together the best sequence. It's more about those little idiosyncrasies on stage, so I didn't know how rewarding it would be to just like--you know--get it perfect and do it over and over again for the camera until there were enough good parts to string together, but it wasn't disappointing like that. You can just **tell** when you've gotten the scene and that's a great feeling.

[listens to question, giggles, interjects with "no no no"]

You wanna see the dance?! *[laughs at audience's applause]* Okay okay okay...

A play about a person who is saving up to buy a diamond for themself.

Person is saving up for a diamond just to have for himself. He has no intentions of getting married or even wearing the diamond to impress others. He simply would like one sparkly little diamond to hold in his hands occasionally and to look at on his mantle. Although, maybe he wouldn't keep it on the mantle so as to avoid theft from friends or passerby's. Person is checking his online banking account after recently receiving his bi-weekly pay via direct-deposit.

Person: When you know what you want, there is no point in doing anything other than trying to get it. I have been saving up for a diamond for years. I have really specific ideas about what my diamond will look like. I'm hoping to work directly with a diamond cutter in India to build my perfect gem. Haven't decided yet if I'll go with princess, pear, or a classic round. Currently, I'm leaning towards princess. I think that shape has such a particular suggestion of power and human intelligence that doesn't come through in the round or pear.

I'm not a very rich or extravagant person. I'm a math teacher at a local private school ten months of the year and during the summers, I'll tutor occasionally. My job affords me so much vacation time and yet I hardly have any desire to go anywhere. That's actually how I got on this diamond-buying kick. About eleven years ago, I took a trip to Scotland because actually I'm about a quarter Scottish--whatever that means. Well, one of the main things to do in Edinburgh is to go to this huge castle in the center of the city. So, I go to this castle and I'm walking around and yeah it's old and there's a ton of history. Eventually, I get to this one room in the center of the castle and it's exceptionally dark but in the middle of the space, there is this illuminated vitrine. And the vitrine has a ton of treasures in it--the crown, sepulcher, staff, etc. But what really got to me was this section of the vitrine where all the crown jewels were laid out.

There was something about the gems that seemed to surpass time. Or they became time. They were just time. Yeah they were just time. I can't explain it because the same argument could be made for just a little rock or some sand, but even those relatively timeless things don't have the same quality as a gem. Anyway, it was that intense feeling of connectedness I felt in that room with those diamonds that created this unwavering desire for my own gem. *[pause]* A gem of my own. And I don't expect to be the kind of person whose personal jewels will ever be in a well-lit vitrine in the center of a dimly-lit room, but I believe that by bringing this cut diamond into being--by working with this cutter in India, that I will have created my own little time piece. Maybe future kings will capture it from dying empires, maybe a bear will swallow it, but whatever happens, it will remain the beautiful diamond that I had a hand in making. Something ultra permanent.

I think I was put on this Earth to be a proponent of diamonds. Someone who selfishly wants a diamond to have for my lifetime, but who unselfishly releases that diamond into the world when I die. I've already thought of this. I would like my diamond to just be put out on my doorstep after I die. Or maybe when I know I'm about to die, I will put it out in the bushes so that someday someone just finds the diamond by chance. Sometimes, I wish I could just find a diamond by chance, but I think it will be much more rewarding to help create my signature jewel.

Luckily, I am at a point where I am able to subsist off of a mere 50% of my bi-weekly paycheck which is directly deposited into my bank account. Of the remaining 50% of my paycheck, 20% is put into my diamond savings and 30% is put into my retirement fund. I would like to retire early and have a diamond. A yellow diamond--like the sunshine.



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